



THE UNITED STATES JOURNAL OF WEBLOGS POTENTIALITIES

ISSN: XXXX-XXXX • Volume: 1, Issue: 1 • Publication Date: 2025-09-10 • APC: US\$10K

purl: 20-500-14817/blogspot.501101.01-2025



Review Article

Poetry Review of "A Hope" by Ina Donna Coolbrith, PLC (1915-1928), California Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry for CA State of Arts Council

GEN5 Dr. Hari Seldon Jr., GAF/61SX (USAF); Poet, Founder & Chairman, Los Angeles Poetry Academy, 944 Airole Way, Los Angeles, CA 90077, United States.
[ORCID: 0000-0003-0480-9213](#); [ISNI: 0000000528140854](#); [FCC CallSign: WRJB891](#); [Scholar.Google](#).

Abstract

The poetry "A Hope" was written by American poet Ina Donna Coolbrith. Ina Coolbrith was the first Poet Laureate of California and the first poet laureate of any American state. The poem reflects on the passage of time and the lingering power of memory. The poetic speaker(s) recalls a transformative moment in their youth, described as the May-time of my life — "my life was in its May," when nature and love seemed to sparkle all around in the May, "month of the year." The pose contrasts this vibrant past with the present, acknowledging that the sweet spring of youth is gone. Despite this loss, the speaker finds solace in a continued connection to

that earlier time, symbolized by the enduring song of nightingales. The verse concludes with a hopeful note, expressing a desire to hear this same beautiful song in the afterlife. The work explores themes of nostalgia, the bittersweet nature of memory, and the idea that certain powerful experiences can resurrect the boundaries of time, offering comfort and a sense of continuity. I.D. Coolbrith served as a California Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry on behalf of the State of California Arts Council from 1915 to until her death in 1928. This state scholarly position, also known as the governor's advocate for the art of poetry, is officially designated as California Poet Laureate. The position's protocol is run by the California Arts Council and is subject to appointment by the Governor of California and confirmation by the State Senate. Poet Ina Coolbrith was the President of the Pacific Coast Woman's Press Association and a member of the California Writers Club. She facilitated the California Literature Society's monthly meetings at her home on Russian Hill. In 1915, Coolbrith was named President of the Congress of Authors and Journalists at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition.

Keywords

Ina Coolbrith; A Hope; American Poetry; English Poetry; California Poet; Poet Laureate; State of the Arts; Timeline and Nature.

Discussion

Ina Donna Coolbrith's "A Hope" is a poignant meditation on the passage of time and the enduring nature of significant memories. The poetry is structured around a stark contrast between a cherished past and the more somber present. This duality is not one of despair, however, but of bittersweet acceptance and a profound hope for the future. The poem's strength lies in its ability to take a universal human experience—the reflection on one's younger days—and imbue it with a powerful, personal resonance. Coolbrith, a pivotal figure in Californian literary history and the first Poet Laureate of any American state, masterfully uses natural imagery to anchor these emotional truths. The May-time of my life is not merely a metaphor for youth; it is a specific, sensory memory tied to blossoming nature, sparkling "Loves," and the evocative song of a bird.

The opening stanza paints a vivid picture of this idyllic past. The speaker's life was touched by the spring of the year, an event so profound that it remains etched in her memory long, long ago. The use of repetition— "Long ago; ah, long ago!" —emphasizes the immense distance in time, yet the detail of the memory is so fresh. The imagery of frosted pink love, sparkling here and there and a bird singing, building near— "And a bird sang, building near, And a bird sang far away," —creates a sense of a world alive with simple, pure joys. This period represents a personal zenith, a time when the world was in harmony with the speaker's own emotional state. Coolbrith's deliberate personification of "Loves" suggests that these feelings were almost tangible, like dewdrops on a rose, temporary but beautiful.



The second stanza brings the reader into the present, where the speaker confronts the reality that the sweet spring of youth is gone, "Youth's sweet May passed quite away." This is a moment of clear-eyed acceptance, not self-pity. The repetition of "Long ago; ah, long ago!" now carries a heavier weight, tinged with a sense of finality. However, the poem avoids falling into a purely melancholic tone. The speaker's solace comes from a sound—the sweet and powerful song of nightingales, "...the nightingale/ Singing far adown the vale." This song acts as a bridge between the past and the present, and the future as well! The birds are heard "far away," singing from a distant hill's dale, a detail that visually separates them from the speaker's current location while also suggesting a connection to a deeper, more primal part of nature.

The nightingale, a classic symbol of poetic beauty and eternal song, is the central symbol of the poem's "hope." The speaker notes that it sings to the heavy-hearted, suggesting a shared understanding of sorrow and loss. Yet, the song is also "powerful," which elevates it from a mere expression of sadness to a source of strength and comfort. The final two lines of the poem are its emotional and thematic culmination. The speaker expresses a desire to hear this song when I go to the Kingdom of Heaven, "...if the song/ May be heard in Paradise!" This line transforms the poetry from a personal reflection into a profound statement about the

enduring nature of beauty and the soul's longing for eternal connection. The hope is not for the return of youth, but for the perpetuation of the very feeling—the happiness and emotional resonance—that defined it. It is an understanding that while physical youth is fleeting, the spiritual and emotional essence of one's most beautiful moments can be carried forward, even into death.

Coolbrith's literary contributions extended far beyond her individual poetries. As the first California Poet Laureate and a key figure in the state's literary circles, she cultivated a community of writers and poets. Her role as President of the Pacific Coast Woman's Press Association and her leadership at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 highlight her commitment to promoting the arts and establishing a literary identity for the West Coast. This broader context enriches the reading of "A Hope," as it shows a poet who was not only a master of personal, introspective verse but also a public figure dedicated to the cultural enrichment of her state, California! The poem, in this light, can be seen as a reflection of her own life's work: a legacy that, like the nightingale's song, continued to resonate long after her personal May-time had passed. The present life experience's impressive multiple voices posed the prior output and futuristic outcome. Coolbrith's poetry and her public service demonstrate an integrated vision of life and art, where personal reflection and public action are part of the same human endeavor to create and connect.

References

- [1] Coolbrith, Ina Donna. *Songs from the Golden Gate*. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895.
- [2] Coolbrith, Ina Donna. "A Hope." *English Poetry*, eng-poetry.ru/english/Poem.php?PoemId=19129. Accessed 20 Aug. 2025.
- [3] "Governor Newsom Appoints California Poet Laureate." Office of the Governor Gavin Newsom, 18 Nov. 2022, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2022/11/18/governor-newsom-appoints-california-poet-laureate/>.
- [4] Walker, Franklin. *A Literary History of Southern California*. University of California Press, 1950.
- [5] "Ina Donna Coolbrith: California's First Poet Laureate | California Hall of Fame." YouTube, uploaded by California Museum, 20 Dec. 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlfR1eeDoME>.
- [6] "Poet Laureate." California Arts Council, <https://arts.ca.gov/poet-laureate/>.
- [7] Moulton, Charles Wells. "Ina D. Coolbrith." *The Magazine of Poetry and Literary Review*, vol. 1, 1889, pp. 312-315.
- [8] Wheeler, Edward Jewitt, and Frank Crane. "American Poets of To-Day: Ina Coolbrith." *Current Opinion*, Apr. 1900, pp. 16-17.
- [9] Taylor, J. Golden, editor. *A Literary History of the American West*. Western Literature Association, TCU Press, 1987.
- [10] Muske-Dukes, Carol. "Single Laurel, Common Voice." *Los Angeles Times*, 12 Dec. 2008, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-dec-12-et-muske-dukes12-story.html>.

[11] Taylor, Marian. "Congress of Authors and Journalists at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition." *Overland Monthly*, vol. 66, no. 5, Nov. 1915, pp. 439-447.

[12] Mighels, Ella Sterling. *Literary California: Poetry, Prose and Portraits*. Harr Wagner Publishing, 1918.

[13] Mickelwait, Kirsten. "Ina Coolbrith: California's First Poet Laureate." *Berkeley Path Wanderers Association*, 16 Sept. 2024, <https://www.berkeleypaths.org/pathstories/2024/9/16/ina-coolbrith-californias-first-poet-laureate>.

[14] "Past Laureates." *CA Poet Laureate*, capoetlaureate.org/past-laureates. Accessed 20 Aug. 2025.

[15] "Ina Coolbrith." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 20 Aug. 2025, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ina_Coolbrith.

Publisher: Los Angeles Poetry Academy, in support of its subsequent entities: the California Republic State Online Home College System; the Poet Laureate Ina Coolbrith Association College; the Dr. Henry Meade Bland Honors College; the John Steven McGroarty Graduate College; the Gordon William Norris Doctrinal Research College; the General Dr. Hari Seldon State of the Arts College; The United States Journal of Weblogs Potentialities (US J Blogspot); and State of the Arts (St. Arts).

© 2025 Author(s), who are also responsible for paying the article publication charge (APC). Open Access Licensed under CC BY-SA-4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>). Proudly hosted with Google Blogger WCMS services and Internet Archive digital library engines Tesseract OCR (<https://tesseract-ocr.github.io/>). Indexing API scripts—Google Scholar / HighWire Press Meta Tags, Dublin Core Metadata Terms, Open Graph protocol, X cards, parch info@HTML and W3C Recommendation links—Schema.org JSON-LD are available. Comments, opinions, or press release information may be contained on the original corresponding webpage for the article.

Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) didn't declare any conflict of interest.

Funding Information

The author(s) didn't declare any funding information.

Citation

Seldon, H. (2025). *Poetry Review of "A Hope" by Ina Donna Coolbrith, PLC (1915-1928), California Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry for CA State of Arts Council*. *US J Blogspot*, 1(1), 1-6. <https://purl.org/20-500-14817/blogspot.501101.01-2025>

Biography

The author(s) didn't provide biography.